

CSC, Tongue Partially in Cheek, Wants Right to Fire at Age 55

By JOSEPH YOUNG
Star Staff Writer

The right of the Government to fire its employes when they reach age 55 is being advocated by the Civil Service Commission.

Of course, part of the CSC's proposal can be taken with a grain of salt, since the commission knows that Congress would not go along with this for one minute.

Also, there's a bit of tongue-in-cheek in the CSC's proposal, for it is actually a rejoinder to the bill to allow Federal employes to retire optionally at age 55 on full annuities after 30 years service. Senate Civil Service Committee hearings on the bill start next Tuesday.

The CSC has opposed the measure each time hearings have been held on it the past few years.

Now, however, the CSC, while still opposing the bill, has come up with a new gimmick.

It says it will go along with the bill if Congress amends it to make it a "two-way street."

If it's all right to allow Federal employes the choice to retire on full annuities after 30 years service at age 55, why shouldn't the Government have the same right in reverse, says the CSC.

In other words, the CSC, in return for giving Federal employes the optional right to retire on full annuities after 30 years service at age 55, wants the Government to have the right to fire employes under the same conditions.

Under the counter-proposal, agencies could give employes 60-day notices when they reach age 55 and have at least 30 years of service, to the effect that they will be fired 60 days hence.

The postal and Government employe unions as well as Congress would never agree to this and the CSC knows it. But the CSC apparently feels that this is as good a way as any from discouraging employe unions from seeking the optional retirement legislation.

Even so, Government employe unions are disturbed over

the CSC's attitude. Not even the most reactionary company in private industry would dare institute a general policy of firing employes when they reach age 55. Yet the CSC, on behalf of the United States Government, which is urging industry to give better employment opportunities to older persons, advocates that the Government have the right to fire its employes at age 55.

SAFETY LEGISLATION—

Senator Humphrey of Minnesota, the Senate Democratic whip, has sponsored legislation to establish minimum safety standards for all Government agencies in order to reduce on-the-job accidents among employes.

Senator Humphrey said that at present there are no minimum safety standards in Government, with the result that on-the-job accidents among Federal workers have increased 23 per cent over the last five years, with hundreds of thousands of employes seriously injured and some killed. He also said that at present there is no one agency or co-ordinating body in Government to direct safety programs.

Co-sponsors with Senator Humphrey are Senators Yarbrough of Texas and Clark of Pennsylvania, Democrats; and Javits of New York and Prouty of Vermont, Republicans.

The bill would give the Secretary of Labor authority to develop, promulgate and promote minimum safety standards for Federal agencies. It would require the head of each Federal agency to establish a safety program in conformity with the standards and regulations set by the Secretary of Labor.

Continuous surveys and investigations of injury cases to provide useful information to agencies on how to avoid such accidents would be provided under the bill, plus co-ordination of safety information for the use of all agencies. An advisory staff of technicians would be provided for agencies to help them improve their safety efforts. Training and educational facilities in the

field of safety would be provided for Government personnel officials and others who deal with employes. There also would be established a Federal Safety Advisory Committee to include representatives of both labor and management.

UNMARRIED EMPLOYEES—

Representative Olsen, Democrat of Montana, has sponsored a bill, HR-6068, to provide annuities for dependent parents of unmarried Government employes who die.

TIME OFF—Representative Joelson, Democrat of New Jersey, has sponsored HR-5592, to provide time off with pay for Government employes engaged in grievance procedures and other labor-management duties in connection with their union work, where this results in their being absent from their job.

AIR FORCE—The Air Force is doing everything it can to minimize the impact of the approximately 5 per cent reduction in civilian personnel that it has been ordered to make.

An outside hiring freeze is being imposed on all jobs that can be filled by displaced Air Force employes, each major air command will co-ordinate their programs to hire displaced employes from other units in the command, job qualification standards will be waived in assigning displaced employes to other Air Force jobs, and the attrition method will be used to achieve the personnel reduction goal by not filling personnel vacancies caused by normal turnover in order to avoid firing of present employes. Also, an intensive placement program to find jobs for employes in other Government agencies and industry will be undertaken.

Air Force civilian personnel director John Watts as well as all other Air Force officials from Secretary Zuckert on down deserve credit for a humane and enlightened attitude in dealing with a problem of great concern to many civilian employes and the members of their families.